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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the issues regarding current expansion of NATO membership to include Romania and Bulgaria. The perspective given is that of the United States and places the Romanian and Bulgarian cases within the context of those issues. Sections of the paper include: (1) "The Road to Madrid: Expansion of NATO"; (2) "No Easy Answers: The Impending Debate Over NATO Expansion"; (3) "Rejected Suitors: Romania and Bulgaria"; and (4) "Conclusion." (EH)

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**NATO Expansion: Romania and Bulgaria
within the Larger Context.**

**Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminars Abroad, 1997.
(Romania and Bulgaria)**

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NATO EXPANSION:
ROMANIA AND BULGARIA WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT

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On July 11, 1997 a group of fifteen United States academics and their Romanian hosts gathered in a hotel room in Tulcea to witness President Bill Clinton's address to the Romanian people in Bucharest in which the president promised that Romania would be among the first considered for inclusion in the next round of expansion for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in April 1999. Throughout the talk, the Romanians exuberated greater enthusiasm for the president and his speech than did the Americans. Several days later in Sofia, Bulgaria the U.S. academics were more interested in the events surrounding NATO expansion than their Bulgarian hosts.

While the reasons for the varied attitudes may be easily explained, they may also be symptomatic of the larger issues involved with the organization's expansion eastward. In the immediate time period preceding the Tulcea experience, the Americans had been traveling throughout Romania for twelve days with little opportunity to read about the Madrid summit or view English language television newscasts. Once in Sofia, where they would spend several days, the opportunity to read about the summit and concomitant NATO expansion, their interest in and discussion about the subject naturally increased. For the Romanians, whose government's long campaign for admission into NATO included a media blitz at home, Clinton's visit evoked great interest. In contrast, the Bulgarian government commenced its quest for admission late in the game and its expectations were not high. In fact, domestic issues were more pressing.

Still, during the course of the six week Fulbright faculty development seminar in both countries, the attitudes expressed by the Americans, Romanians and Bulgarians reflected the larger issues associated with NATO's expansion. The Americans attitude may have reflected their nation's apparent lack of interest in the subject prior to the Madrid summit; the Romanians excitement an expression of the recognition of their nation's progress toward democracy and a free market economy; and the Bulgarians, the reality of a fragile political and economic system.

NATO's enlargement evolved as a foreign policy objective of the Clinton administration, but from the start it lacked a clear definition of the criterion for admission. Over time, the applicants were measured by their democratic experience, settlement of boundary and ethnic (including religious) disputes and the status of their free market economies. As the process unfolded, concerns about the cost of NATO expansion upon all and its impact upon Russian nationalism were added to the mix of questions that needed to be addressed.

This paper analyzes the issues regarding current expansion as seen from the United States and

places the Romanian and Bulgarian models within the context of those issues.

The Road to Madrid: Expansion of NATO

Late in his administration, President George Bush suggested the expansion of NATO beyond its current sixteen members, but nothing came of it at the time. In April 1993 during the ceremony to open the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., Vaclav Havel and Lech Walesa, the Presidents of the Czech Republic and Poland, urged new President Bill Clinton to expand NATO eastward. At the time, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake and Secretary of State Warren Christopher favored NATO's expansion, but the Pentagon and Strobe Talbott, Christopher's top Russian advisor, opposed such a move. After months of wrangling among the president's advisors, agreement was reached to move forward cautiously and Clinton announced in a speech in Prague in January 1994 that the question was no longer if NATO would expand but when. Only the Pentagon continued to resist. Instead of expansion, it pushed the Partnership for Peace program that allowed east European nations to join NATO military exercises, but not as full members. Finally, in September 1994 Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrook forced the Pentagon's leadership to stop balking at the President's intentions.

Despite intense lobbying by ethnic groups, such as the Polish American Congress, the House Republican "Contract With America" and Senate majority leader Bob Dole all advocating NATO's enlargement, Clinton remained cautious. Polls used by the White House during the 1996 presidential campaign did not indicate that NATO's expansion was a litmus test for approximately 21 million persons of east European descent residing in the United States. Rather, the polls indicated that successes in foreign policy, such as the coming down of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany had greater impact upon the general public. In need of a foreign policy victory, the Clinton administration seized the concept for a unified Europe. Given this rationale and to pre-empt his Republican challenger Bob Dole, Clinton called for NATO's expansion during a campaign speech in Detroit. Following his election, Clinton made a formal proposal for enlargement to congress.¹

At the time of Clinton's announcement, the plan to achieve such a grandiose objective had not been defined and, in fact, NATO seemed to be in disarray. Founded in 1949, the United States and Canada joined Britain, France, and eight other western European nations to form a military alliance to thwart potential Soviet penetration of western Europe. Subsequently expanded to include Germany, Greece and Turkey, NATO encircled the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc states and has been credited with preventing World War III from breaking out on the European continent. From its establishment until the collapse of communist Europe in 1989, the United States assumed NATO's leadership often to the consternation of its allies who wanted a larger role in the formulation of policies and in the decision making process. But the U.S. prevailed, critics argued, because it provided most of the organization's funding and sophisticated military hardware, including nuclear weapons. At the same

time, NATO implicitly accepted the division of Europe, a fact reaffirmed by its failure to intervene in the 1956 Hungarian crisis and 1968 "Prague Spring" in Czechoslovakia.²

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and its concomitant grip over eastern Europe, some critics argued that NATO lost its reason for being. The breakup of the Soviet Union left it, at least for the moment, without the military strength to confront the west. The Russian army fell into disarray, its naval fleet into disrepair and its nuclear weaponry available for sale. The latter issue was partially resolved with U.S. assistance providing for the weapon's destruction and the START II treaty to reduce the number of nuclear warheads on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, the parliaments of all NATO members made steep cuts in their nation's military budgets. Several analysts argued that these actions brought the remnants of the Cold War to an end.³

NATO also appeared paralyzed when confronted with the horrific civil conflict that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia. When President Clinton committed U.S. troops under United Nations auspices, it was done with strings attached, indicating Washington's hesitancy to commit itself to European security. Even the coalition that George Bush brought together for the 1990 Gulf War was frayed by the time of the Madrid summit. Why then, expand NATO? For what purpose? Whose interests would expansion serve? Would expansion stir up historic European animosities? In Washington, the Pentagon planners asked these same questions and concluded that NATO expansion was not in U.S. interests. Although the questions remained unanswered, Clinton went forward.

At Paris on May 27, 1997 Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Clinton and representatives from the other NATO member states signed the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security. It provided for the establishment of a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council to discuss security issues without limiting NATO's authority to station troops or weapons wherever it wishes. The agreement supposedly took the sting out of NATO's planned eastward expansion by bringing Moscow into a consultative position with its former western adversaries.⁴ The road to Madrid had been paved.

Confident that Russian trepidations had been soothed, Clinton anticipated the NATO summit meeting scheduled for early July. In preparing for the meeting Clinton weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the twelve former Eastern bloc nations seeking admission to NATO: Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania and Slovenia and the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In the end, Clinton determined that only three, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland qualified because of their firm democratic footing, market economies and settlement of boundary and ethnic conflicts with their neighbors. Clinton obtained the necessary consensus from his allies to admit the three nations, but only after French President Jacques Chirac secured a promise that Romania and Slovenia be included in the next round of NATO expansion sometime after April 1999. Russian President Yeltsin declined the invitation to be present at the summit's closing ceremony, sending instead Deputy Prime Minister V. M. Serov. For most analysts at Madrid, it was a signal that the Russians had little interest in NATO's eastward thrust.⁵

No Easy Answers: The Impending Debate Over NATO Expansion

A number of themes characterized Clinton's purpose for expanding NATO eastward. The president told the 1997 West Point graduating class that the extension eastward strengthened European democracy, civilian control of the military and provided added security for the United States. He reiterated the same points at a Madrid news conference July 10.¹⁰ Recalling the ideals that have long motivated U.S. foreign policy, Clinton asserted that "[we will] do for Europe's east what we did in Europe's west after World War II: defend freedom, strengthen democracy, temper old rivalries, hasten integration and provide a stable climate in which prosperity can grow."¹¹ Secretary of State Madeline Albright made the same points immediately before the Madrid summit and when speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in October. The administration's position was supported by former national security advisors Zbigniew Brzezinski and Anthony Lake.¹²

The president promoted NATO's enlargement as a modern day equivalent of the Marshall Plan which resulted in the reconstruction of western Europe, contributed to the political reconciliation between France and Germany and decades of peace in all Europe. In contrast, critics made the comparison to the humiliation piled upon Germany with the Treaty of Versailles after World War I. It became the rallying point for the Nazis and created a political vacuum that led directly to World War II.¹³ These issues will be part of the debates to be played out in the spring of 1999, when all NATO parliaments complete their deliberations on the acceptance or rejection of expansion and will impact directly upon the fate of Romania and Bulgaria should NATO again look outward.

When the U.S. congress debated the Marshall Plan in 1947 and 1948 attention focused upon the program's cost, extent of U.S. control over the program and the type of material to be provided to Europe. These same issues will again be a congressional focus, except the material will not be tractors and industrial components, but military hardware and training.

President Clinton projected the cost of NATO's current expansion between \$27 to \$35 billion through the year 2009, a less than one percent increase over NATO's current annual budget of \$440 billion. Washington's share would be \$1.5 to \$2 billion per year through 2009, or about 6% of the total estimated cost. Other organizations put a much higher cost on the project. The Congressional Budget Office, for example, estimated the cost at \$61 to \$125 billion; the Rand Corporation, \$10 to \$110 billion; and the Union of Concerned Scientists, \$90 to \$150 billion.

Clinton not only faces U.S. congressional opposition over funding, but also from other NATO members which are expected to pick up 50% of the expansion costs. While British Prime Minister Tony Blair noted that Clinton's estimates are too high, he also indicated that British military expenditures in the near term are most likely to decrease. French President Jacques Chirac clearly indicated that France will not expend any additional funds to support the admission of the three states to NATO. Rather, he

suggested that the funds be found within the existing NATO budget. Several European governments argued that the current NATO commitments to have mobile armored divisions and air wings ready to rush to the defense of eastern Turkey will also be sufficient to defend new members through 2009 because the Russian army will not be a threat. Germany has been lax about its pledge to reduce its outdated, territorial army and move to the rapid-reaction forces now considered essential, prompting its parliament to be reluctant about meeting NATO expansion cost requirements. Germany is also struggling to meet the stringent criteria for European Union monetary union, which militates against an increase in the military budget. Other NATO members advocate adding four ground divisions at \$2 billion each and six air wings at a cost of \$1 billion each, rather than paying the expansion costs for each new member. Furthermore, serious doubt exists regarding the capabilities of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to finance their share of admission, put at 44% of the total cost. None currently have a large military budget. For the Czech Republic it is 2.5% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP); Hungary 1.7%; and Poland 2.4%. The prospects for increasing those amounts is remote.

One NATO official was correct when he noted that each head of state will need a detailed cost analysis, but that getting realistic estimates of what individual countries will have to pay to defend 14% more territory and 32% more border length will not be an easy task. For example, the cost of moving an American tank a few kilometers down a German road before 1989, contrasts sharply with moving the same tank 300 kilometers further east. There will be an increased need for the tank transporters, spare parts and maintenance facilities. NATO's own study is due out by the end of 1997. Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jesse Helms (R., N.C.) may have been correct when he observed that U.S. approval could be a moot point because of the European decisions.

Using Clinton's figures, the National Defense Institute calculated the cost to be 67¢ per year, or a total of \$8.75 over the next 13 years for each U.S. citizen. The monies will be used for several purposes: modernization of the Czech, Hungarian and Polish military forces (ie. the introduction of western military equipment and training; and the construction and maintenance of necessary infrastructure, roads and railroads, air facilities to accommodate the air wings; communications, training sites, storage facilities and reception areas). None of these costs take into account the anticipated inclusion of Romania and Slovenia or the addition of the Baltic States nor any change in Russian military policy prompted by the expansion of NATO. While the percentage of Americans favoring expansion of NATO increased from 43% to 64% from July to October 1997, only 6% thought seriously about the issue and only 10% could name one of three expansion candidates. Such contrasting figures do not provide the administration with a mandate and, in this time of tight budgets, military base closings and proposed additional Pentagon austerity measures, the cost of NATO enlargement will receive utmost congressional consideration in its deliberations in early 1999.¹⁰

Many analysts shared the view of New York Times editorial writer William Safire that the

enlargement of NATO tempers Russia from expanding westward again. Former advisor to President Ronald Reagan and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeanne Kirkpatrick concurred, adding that the addition of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland now and others in the future wards off political instability in eastern Europe, a reason given for previous Russian intervention. USA Today made the same point in its lead editorial July 9, 1997 and the theme was repeated by editorial writers Noam Scheiber in the Chicago Tribune, Craig Hines in the Houston Chronicle and Jim Hoagland in the Washington Post, as did former national security advisors Zbigniew Brzezinski and Anthony Lake, former Defense Secretary Warren M. Perry and Secretary Albright. A wide array of foreign policy experts, 133 in all, including seven former secretaries of state - William P. Rogers, Henry A. Kissinger, Cyrus R. Vance, Alexander M. Haig, Jr., James Baker 3rd, George P. Shultz and Warren Christopher - signed a statement encouraging NATO's enlargement. Some even held out hope that Russia might continue to democratize and eventually become eligible for membership!¹¹

Boris Yeltsin's fishing vacation at the time and the absence of serious notoriety in the Moscow press about the Madrid summit gave confidence to the supporters of NATO's enlargement that Russia had little interest in the project,¹² but it did not prevent critics from voicing their concerns about a resurgent Russian nationalism. As early as February 1997, George Kennan the architect of the containment policy that guided U.S. policy throughout the Cold War warned that expansion would impel Russian foreign policy in directions not to the west's liking. On the eve of the Madrid summit, Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of the former U.S. president who also was NATO's first commander, engineered a formidable letter of protest endorsed by more than thirty former lawmakers, diplomats and foreign affairs experts, including former senators Sam Nunn, Gordon Humphrey and Mark Hatfield. Also on the list were former U.S. Ambassadors to Moscow Jack Matlock and Arthur Hartman, former CIA Director Stansfield Turner and President Reagan's chief arms negotiator Paul Nitze. All shared Kennan's concern with a resurgent Russian nationalism. Professors Michael Mandelbaum, at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies and Alvin Z. Rubinstein at the University of Pennsylvania and Eugene Carroll, Deputy Director for Defense Information, asserted that the growth of NATO would be counterproductive and turn the Russians away from accommodation with the west. When Senator Jesse Helms issued a qualified endorsement of NATO's enlargement within the Cold War framework by directing it at Russia, he further encouraged the opposition spokespersons. The critics of expansion also argued that more pressing issues, like international terrorism, drug interdiction, global access to oil, disarmament and the START II treaty deserved greater attention with Moscow. Discussion of these issues would be jeopardized by NATO's enlargement.¹³

Furthermore, critics pointed out that Russia has long distrusted the west dating to its isolation following World War I, the delay in the cross channel invasion during World War II and since 1991 the inattention given to the suffering of its people except to demand "market reforms." Expansion eastward also violated promises made in 1990 to Mikhail Gorbachev following the unification of Germany. At the

Madrid summit, the Ukraine signed a "Charter on a Distinctive Partnership" with the NATO alliance. It provided for the establishment of information offices in Brussels and Kiev and for consultation on a variety of issues including civil emergency planning and nuclear safety. Such actions, the critics cautioned, would be viewed in Moscow as provocative and, with its ground army in disarray, the Russians might become more reliant upon its nuclear weapons. There were some grumblings from Moscow too. Two likely candidates for the 2000 presidential election, General Aleksandr I. Ledbed and Moscow Mayor Yuri M. Luzhkov railed against Yeltsin's sellout of Russia's national interest and called for a revival of Russia's western security zone. Alexei Arbatov, deputy chairman of the Russian parliament's defense committee, cautioned the west not to take Moscow's summer complacency as an attitude of indifference. He noted that Russia has historic grievances with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland and that Russia should have been consulted regarding their admission to NATO. And the perception that Russia has been relegated to a junior status in world affairs, contributed to a loss of maneuvering room for those Russian 'democrats' wanting further accommodation with the west. Arbatov also warned that Russia might become less cooperative with regards to other international matters and confirmed the U.S. critics concern that the Russian parliament now has reason not to ratify the Start II Treaty.¹⁴ In this context, are the current Russian policies about Iraq's confrontation with the U.N. over arms inspection and its search for arms markets in Latin America a reflection of a hardened position vis-a-vis the west?

NATO's expansion eastward not only is a test of the Russian will and policy, but also its historic strategic interest in eastern and central Europe. This initial encroachment into the former Soviet satellite states does not directly threaten Russian borders. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are buffeted by other nations from the Russian boundaries. The remaining Gray Zone, stretching from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Adriatic in the South, present different problems for any future NATO expansion. Two, Estonia and Latvia, border directly upon Russia and a third, Lithuania, is adjacent to Kalingrad, an important Russian Baltic Sea outlet. Bulgaria and Romania are strategically located on the Black Sea. Despite Secretary Albright's assertion at Madrid that, in the future, NATO would be open to all European democracies, the Russians have made it clear that any western encroachment into the Baltic region would be considered a threat to its national security. And Russia's displeasure with Operation Sea Breeze in the Ukraine in September 1997¹⁵ might be taken as a harbinger of its position regarding the future incorporation of Romania and Bulgaria into NATO.

Three other NATO applicants - Albania, Macedonia and Slovenia - are a distance from Russia but are situated in the Balkan tinderbox characterized by its ethnic and religious strife. On July 8, the opening day of the Madrid summit, The Christian Science Monitor asked on its front page: "Are Americans Ready to Go to War for Prague ?" Three months later, a The New York Times headline noted "Bosnia: The Skunk at the NATO Party." Speaking in Arizona, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher subtly emphasized the same point when she suggested that ethnic and religious

rivalries of eastern Europe are too deeply rooted and that strife among these peoples can be expected to continue. Critics pointed to Bosnia, where the European NATO members were reluctant to intervene until the United States made a troop commitment. But that commitment is due to expire in June 1998 and, while President Clinton has indicated that U.S. troops will need to stay beyond that date, there is serious doubt about congress's willingness to comply, particularly with no settlement of the crisis in sight. Beyond Bosnia, many western European analysts look to North Africa and the Middle East as danger spots because of Islamic Fundamentalism. The Bosnian situation and the continuing crisis in Iraq may well serve as a limiting factor upon NATO expansion into eastern Europe.¹⁶

Rejected Suitors: Romania and Bulgaria

Throughout the three week stay in Romania local academics, business people, Fulbright Commission personnel and the proverbial "man on the street" offered opinions about their country's application to NATO.¹⁷ With few exceptions, they maintained that Romania was equally qualified as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland and therefore expressed disappointment at the news from Madrid. For most Romanians, Clinton's visit to Bucharest and the promise of admission in the near future assuaged the disappointment. Among the dissenters was one Romanian historian who argued that despite a variety of bilateral treaties with its neighbors, the age-old ethnic rivalries that characterize the region made those agreements little more than scraps of paper. Given that fragility, he argued, NATO could have little interest about including Romania in any enlargement scheme. The second expression of dissent came from a small cross section of society encountered on the streets and in the shops in Bucharest, Brasov, Sibiu, Cluj and Timisoara. These individuals suggested that President Emil Constantinescu deliberately conducted a public relations campaign for admission to NATO, knowing full well the objective was unobtainable. His purpose, these persons maintained, was to redirect the popular focus from the problems of inflation and unemployment, and the need for social safety nets, job creation, educational reform. Their mistrust of government was shared by more than half of the Romanian people according to one local opinion survey.¹⁸

Advocates of Romania's admission to NATO also pointed to its strategic importance. With Poland to the north, it served as the southern anchor of a linchpin that would cement the alliance territorially and strategically. They also argued that Romania is a Black Sea power, the great inland ocean whose importance is bound to grow sharply as it becomes the route enabling oil from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to reach international markets. For the moment, Turkey stands alone in trying to stabilize the area and a second NATO member state bordering the Black Sea could be the west's best tool to help

ensure regional stability. Implicit in this argument is Romania's recollection of Russia's historic pan-slavism and fifty years of forced membership in Moscow's eastern Bloc. Furthermore, as demonstrated over the past few years, the continent's stability requires crisis management in the Balkans and Romania offers significant capabilities for influencing events in the region. The Bosnian conflict highlighted the importance of controlling the Danube River. Without the ability to regulate traffic on the river, it would have been impossible to block Serbia. The international community's base for policing the river traffic was in Romania.

The Romanians also pridefully pointed to being the first eastern European country to formally join the Partnership for Peace program and that its troops have participated in the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Iraq/Kuwait and currently in Albania. The military, which played a key roll in the overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu in December 1989, appears to be under civilian control, along with other security forces.¹⁹

Romania satisfies another NATO criteria: peaceful relations with its neighbors. It has reached agreements with Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Poland and in July completed a pact with the Ukraine. These friendship treaties terminate disputes that date to the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact and various ethnic issues. In fact, one of the arguments advanced for NATO admission is that Romania's ethnic mix allows it to serve as mediator in disputes in the Mediterranean diaspora. Most recently it has offered to host talks between Israel and Syria.

With the election of Emil Constantinescu in November 1996, the transition to democracy appears to be firmly in place, a fact re-enforced by the disarray Party of Social Democracy. Still Constantinescu's broad coalition remains fragile given the country's economic conditions. While inflation is down to about 20% per year, wages still lag far behind, except for the militant miners. Privatization is in place, but at a slow pace. While approximately 600,000 private companies have been founded since 1989, most have been small family owned operations and many have since gone out of business. Seventy five percent of state owned industries remain in government hands and not until August did the government privatize 17 state owned factories. And more recently AMOCO agreed to invest \$1 billion in Romanian crude oil and natural gas production. Many observers anticipate opposition to these measures from both the general populous and politicians. Still, while Romania lags behind the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, signs of optimism abound.²⁰

In contrast, the Bulgarians were more subdued in responding to their government's failed bid to join NATO.²¹ In its lead editorial on July 24, the weekly English language newspapers The Sofia Independent and The Sofia Echo summarized the reasons: (1) only since January 1997 did the Bulgarian government express interest and then, only half heartedly; (2) despite the trend towards democratic government, the general populous did not have confidence in its government; and (3) the Bulgarians did not understand the responsibilities that come with participation in NATO. The Sofia Echo also added that an undercurrent of opinion throughout the country yearned for the "good old days" of the guarantees

offered by state socialism.²² These opinions were reaffirmed by the various speakers throughout seminar and by the individuals encountered in private conversations during the three week visit throughout Bulgaria.

The majority of westerners have long perceived Bulgaria as being closely tied to the Soviet Union during the Cold War period and that its government was among the most oppressive among the Eastern Bloc countries. Not all Bulgarians shared this viewpoint, but did admit that the legacies of communism remain today. Like other countries in eastern Europe, Bulgaria broke free of the Soviet yoke in 1989, but the new political and social organizations that followed were dominated by the former communists. Immediately a plethora of non-experienced political parties surfaced, fifteen of which came together to form the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). It briefly held a parliamentary majority, but given its political infighting and the strength of the former communists and ethnic minority representatives, the parliament struggled with constitutional, not economic and social reforms. Given this political vacuum, the communist party emerged triumphant and for the next seven years the quest for sheer power resulted in political confrontation and the lack of economic reform. Corruption and nepotism characterized the government.

Amidst the political infighting, the Bulgarian economy worsened. Whereas Bulgaria had been a net exporter of food in the old Eastern Bloc trading partnership (COMECON), by the winter of 1996-97 the nation could not feed itself. Privatization of agriculture lagged, the mechanics of collectivization could not meet the market demands and the emergence of a "Mafia" all contributed to the problem. The "Mafia" comprised of former communist political and military elites developed a system of bribery and intimidation over the farmers that resulted in exportation of grains for their personal profit, rather than domestic consumption. At the same time, state owned industries fell into the hands of former managers. Production stagnated. In sum, the shortage of goods, coupled with the inability to pay for imports caused hyper-inflation by November 1996²³, prompted public demonstrations and a political crisis. The political crisis continued until the general elections in April 1997, won by the UDF, now a 17 party coalition.

The new government is confronted with a multitude of economic difficulties. Today the private sector contributes 25% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs 30% of the workers. Privatization, however, will not be easy. There is a strong political challenge to economic reform. Property titles are in dispute and vast amounts of farm land remain unused. The existing "Mafia" continues to resist losing its control over agricultural exports and the industrial sector. Government regulations and corruption militate against foreign investment. Due to a of the lack of job opportunities an estimated 300,000 young people, most highly educated, have departed for other European countries. Despite these bleak indicators, a surge in optimism followed the government's adoption of an austere budget, the pegging of its currency to the German mark and the signing on to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CETA) in late July. There is hope that a \$250 million modernization project for the port of Burgus will make it a center of Black Sea and central and eastern European commerce. While

the new coalition government appears to willing to work together, one analyst observed that the country's "political maturity may be tested because Bulgaria will probably show no substantial growth until 1999."²⁴

In addition to the political and economic dynamics, many of the Bulgarian people have lost the sense of social security guaranteed by the preceding communist governments, particularly among the older generation. This takes on added importance with an aging population and a declining birth rate. The resistance to change is exacerbated by an unwillingness to try something new. More than one Bulgarian commented that globalization and western ideas may not be best for the country. While these may be expressions of frustration at the current economic-political situation, the Bulgarians must also deal with their long history of ethnic rivalries that challenge contemporary society. The Turkish minority is the most visible political force and its Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) is the second largest political party in parliament. On the positive side, Bulgaria's long standing disagreement with Turkey over the treatment of resident nationals improved with the signing of an agreement in July, when President Petar Stoyanov visited Ankara. He also pledged not to let the Kurds use Bulgarian territory for attacks upon Turkey. In return, the Turks promised to help with removing Bulgaria from the Organization for the Islamic Conference (OIC) list of nations that fail to give proper treatment of Muslims.²⁵ Like its Romanian neighbor to the north, Bulgaria sits in a strategic area many consider vital to European security and although it has no outstanding international disputes, its tense relations with the Serbs and Macedonians have historic roots.

In the midst of these cross-currents, President Stoyanov offered Bulgaria as a candidate for NATO membership in January 1997 and repeated the request again in May 1997. The fear of Russia appeared as the primary motivating factor, a fear confirmed in private conversations with Bulgarian academics, legislators and ordinary citizens. Obviously, the government saw no contradiction between its NATO application and willingness to maintain friendship with Moscow at the same time.

In addition to the political frailty and economic instability, many observers, including Americans, argued that the Bulgarian military acts independently, despite the constitutional provision that places it under civilian control. Because it possesses extensive Russian military hardware²⁶, many argue that the army does not want to antagonize Russia by joining NATO, yet it became a willing member of the Partnership for Peace Program in February 1994. Subsequently, the Bulgarian military cooperated in training for the improvement of the country's air defense system, modernization of command-and-control, and standardization of military equipment. Bulgaria participated in the "Cooperative Bridge Program" in Poland, in the United Nations peacekeeping in Cambodia (UNTAC) and has observed international sanctions against neighboring Serbia, but resolutely abstained from involvement in any NATO or multinational military operations in the Balkans.²⁷

Given the lateness of its application, its political and economic turmoil and concern about its military, Bulgaria had only two advocates at the Madrid summit: Greece and Turkey. The subsequent visit by U.S. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen received a positive spin in Sofia's English language

newspapers²⁸, but several Bulgarians privately expressed the concern that the demands for membership might be too high. Not all Bulgarians are prepared to accept the economic changes necessary for NATO membership.

Conclusion

_____ In July 1997, as the fifteen U.S. Fulbright academicians gathered in Tulcea and later in Sofia, neither they nor their Romanian and Bulgarian hosts discussed the extensive scope of the debate that awaits the European parliaments and the U.S. congress regarding the admission of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Yet the results of those debates and the subsequent Russian actions will profoundly influence the anticipated next round of NATO expansion in April 1999.

Each head of state at Madrid fretted over the cost of NATO enlargement: who will pay and how much? Just as the Czechs, Hungarians and Poles must measure their financial ability to participate in NATO now, Romania and Bulgaria may face the same issue in 1999. Although Romania has long produced its own military equipment and Bulgaria utilized Russian equipment, each must make their resources more interoperable with NATO hardware. Currently, the Romanian military receives 9.3% of total government expenditures, or 1.7% of the Gross National Product (GNP) and the Bulgarian military 6.3% of total government expenditures, or 2.8% of the GNP. Given other demands on the government budget, can each afford to expend further resources on military modernization? And for the Romanians can they afford continued participation in joint NATO exercises, such as the operation "Sea Breeze" in the Ukraine in September?²⁹

"These people are preoccupied with the past," commented one U.S. embassy staffer and well they might be given the history of Russian Pan-slavism and fifty years of forced membership in Moscow's Eastern Bloc. Under such conditions many Romanians and Bulgarians see NATO as an insurance policy against future Russian expansion westward. Several western policymakers share that opinion, arguing that NATO's enlargement removes Russia further from western Europe. Yet, other western policymakers argue that NATO's eastward thrust will more likely produce a nationalistic response in Russia and rekindle its interests in eastern Europe. This forces the question regarding article 5 of the NATO treaty, which provides that an attack upon one is considered an attack upon all. Is the west willing to go to war over Romania and Bulgaria? Just what are the western interests on the edge of the Black Sea? The Russian response to the expected current NATO enlargement may provide the answer. Or is the western response to the collapse of Yugoslavia a harbinger of the future?

The internal dynamics of each country also will shape the argument over any future NATO enlargement. Given the experiences of Romania and Bulgaria since 1989 each is at a different stage of development regarding democratic government and free market economies. Each is confronted with popular demands for control of inflation, job creation and training, availability of consumer goods, the

need for social safety nets and educational reform, to mention only a few. Privatization of state owned agriculture and industrial plants remain contentious issues. Economic development is hampered by a lack of entrepreneurial spirit; most people do not envision themselves working for the greater good of society, but rather for themselves. Furthermore, engineering and technical training characterized higher education during the communist years. The reorientation of education toward business programs has just begun. At the same time western countries face domestic pressures regarding their economic health in face of the globalization of the market place. These domestic issues may be more important in 1999 than the desire to participate in international affairs.

The forthcoming debate over the enlargement of NATO brings together many intertwined issues. There are no easy answers, but whatever the outcome, the results will have direct bearing upon Romania and Bulgaria should NATO again decide to expand in 1999.

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